Castleton WwTW Car Park

Planning Statement

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Castleton WwTW Car Park

1. Introduction, Background and Site Location

1.1) Site Location

1.1.1) The site subject to this planning application is located on Land to the West of Castleton Wastewater Treatment Works, Hopwood Cottage, Rochdale Road, Middleton.

1.1.2) The location of the proposed development adjoins the eastern boundary of Manchester Golf Club (MGC) and is circa 1km north of the existing clubhouse.

1.1.3) The nearest postcode for the proposed development is M24 6QP, with the approximate grid reference of easting 387988, northing 409447.

1.1.4) The exact location of the existing car park can be found in drawing reference U5688-0035P-LP-01.

1.1.5) The site is not allocated for development within Rochdale's Local Plan.

1.2) Context on the proposed development

1.2.1) United Utilities have recently carried out two capital schemes to improve wastewater quality and provide additional stormwater storage capacity at Castleton WwTW.

1.2.2) As part of this scheme, an area of hardstanding associated with the construction compound was established and utilised for contractor parking as part of the development on land outside of the WwTW belonging to Manchester Golf Club.

1.2.3) Upon completion of the scheme, the car park was planned to be reinstated back to its previous condition.

1.2.4) However, following discussions with MGC, the club wish to retain this parking provision. It has been agreed that UU will submit the planning application for the retention of this hardstanding on Manchester Golf Club's behalf.

1.3) The scheme and requirement for the development

1.3.1) On behalf of Manchester Golf Club, United Utilities seek planning permission for the retention of an existing car park constructed lawfully under permitted development powers.

1.3.2) The additional parking spaces represent a significant opportunity to enhance the facilities on offer at MGC. Spanning 247 acres, MGC plays host to the Ladies European Tour Access Series Tournament, England's Golf's Reid Trophy and the Women's Open Strokeplay Championship.

1.3.3) Hosting international standard golf events draws in an increasing number of spectators hoping to witness elite level play on course.

1.3.4) The proposal for additional car parking spaces is circa 1km north of the existing club house, where the majority of parking provision exists for the club. Allowing additional parking spaces not only provides capacity improvements in general for parking provision on site but also enables improved access to the course for members and spectators. This is particularly relevant in the case of visitors who are mobility-impaired, and the introduction of this modest increase in parking spaces gives greater flexibility for visitors to enjoy the golf which the course provides.

1.4.5) The proposed new parking will be an integral part of the golf club's infrastructure which will help to attract and deliver international standard amateur and professional golf events at Manchester Golf Club. This

provides significant social benefits to participants and spectators at MGC, alongside increasing economic benefit at local and regional scales by facilitating improved hosting capabilities for the golf club.

1.4.6) The above principles are strongly supported by the purposes of the planning system as prescribed by National Planning Policy Framework, which holistically aims to contribute to the achievement of Sustainable Development

2. Permitted Development Rights

2.1) General Permitted Development Order

2.1.1) As a statutory undertaker, UU benefit from Permitted Development (PD) rights under Part 13, Class B and C of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 and under Part 2 Class A and B. The temporary placement of buildings, moveable structures, works, plant or machinery is also permitted development under Part 4, Class A of the Regulations.

2.1.2) Part 4, Class A of the regulations is most pertinent to the existing, temporary car park; stating that 'the provision on land of buildings, moveable structures, works, plant or machinery required temporarily in connection with and for the duration of operations being or to be carried out on, in, under or over that land or on land adjoining that land'.

2.1.3) The temporary car park is located on a parcel of land directly adjoining the existing WwTW boundary. The car park provides a small number of contractor parking as part of the construction compound to facilitate the permitted development works on the existing treatment works. Given the existing car park is directly adjacent to the WwTW boundary, it is considered to constitute 'works', demonstrating its lawful construction with respect to Part 4, Class A of the Town and County Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015.

2.1.4) For the avoidance of doubt, the most recent Capital Delivery Scheme on operational land at Castleton Wastewater Treatment Works consisted of the installation of an 1800m3 detention tank, to store effluent during storm events, in turn reducing spills into Trub Brook. This infrastructure is considered permitted development with respect to Part 13, Class B(f) of the Town and County Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015.

2.1.5) Before this lawful use ends, United Utilities seek planning permission to retain the existing car park.

3. Planning Policy

3.1) National Planning Policy

3.1.1) The National Planning Policy Framework was most recently updated on the 17th of August 2026. The Planning Practice Guidance provides detailed guidance on how policies within the NPPF should be applied in practice. It is continually updated since it was first published in March 2014.

3.1.2) These documents are material in the determination of planning applications, with the below information considered relevant in this planning application as proposed:

National Planning Policy Framework

- Policy DM1 – Preparing development proposals
- Policy DM3 – Determining development proposals
- Policy S3 – Presumption in favour of sustainable development
- Policy S5 – Principle of development outside settlements
- Policy L2 – Making effective use of land

- Policy GB6 - Control of development in the Green Belt
- Policy GB7 – Development which is not inappropriate in the green belt
- Policy DP3 – Key principles for well-designed places
- Policy TR4 – Street design, access and parking
- Policy TR6 – Assessing transport impacts
- Policy HC4 – Proposals for new and improved community facilities, public service infrastructure and development providing public health benefits
- Policy P3 – Living conditions and pollution

3.2) Local Planning Policy

3.2.1) Planning law requires planning applications to be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

3.2.2) This planning application is within the jurisdiction of Rochdale Council. Rochdale's Core Strategy was adopted on the 19th October 2016.

3.2.3) The Local Plan covers the whole of Rochdale's jurisdiction, setting out the council's overall strategy for development. The development plan provides policies to which planning applications must be determined against, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

3.2.4) Following a review of the available planning policy map, the site is situated within the Green Belt.

3.2.5) The core strategy should also be read in conjunction with the Greater Manchester Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan which was adopted in March 2024 and forms part of the statutory development plan for the borough. It provides the strategic framework for the delivery of housing, employment land and infrastructure across Greater Manchester.

3.2.6) It should also be noted that Rochdale Council are in the process of preparing a new local plan, currently at regulation 19 stage. This document can carry some, albeit limited weight, in the determination of the planning application.

3.2.7) The below policies from the Local Plan and Places for Everyone Framework are considered relevant to this application:

Rochdale Core Strategy

Policy SD1 – Delivering Sustainable Development

Policy C8 – Improving community, sport, leisure and cultural facilities

Policy P3 – Improving design of new development

Policy G4 – Protecting Green Belt Land

Policy G7 – Increasing the value of biodiversity and Geodiversity

Policy G9 - Reducing the impact of pollution, contamination and land instability

Policy T2 – Improving accessibility

Policy DM1 – General development requirements

Rochdale Core Strategy Reg 19

Policy G5 – Trees, Hedgerows and Woodland

Policy G7 – Conserving and Enhancing Landscape

Policy T1 – Delivering Transport Principles

Policy T3 – Parking Provision and Drop-off Facilities

Policy T9 – Local Highway Network

Policy DM1 – General Development Requirements

Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan

Policy JP-S1 – Sustainable Development

Policy JP-G9 – The Green Belt

Policy JP-C5 – Streets for All

Policy JP-C8 – Transport Requirements of New Development

4. Pre-Application Advice

4.1) Rochdale Council

4.1.1) A pre-application advice request was submitted to Rochdale Council by MGC, and a formal response was received on the 30th August 2024. Whilst it is noted that the policy framework at present is slightly different to that when the pre-application response was prepared, the principle of development the key policy considerations remain consistent.

4.1.2) The advice considers the principle of development to be acceptable, providing that it can be demonstrated that a) the existing hard standing was constructed lawfully and b) that compliance with national green belt policy can be demonstrated as part of any planning statement.

4.1.3) Advice in the report relating to Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) is not considered relevant to this application due to the recent policy changes introducing exemptions which would apply to this development. This is discussed further in section 6.5.

4.1.4) Residential amenity and highways were considered as part of the advice, and no issues were raised in respect of either matter.

4.1.5) The matters raised in the planning statement are discussed in section 6

5. Design and Access Statement

5.1) Design

5.1.1) The retention of the existing hardstanding covers an area of approximately 1247 square metres.

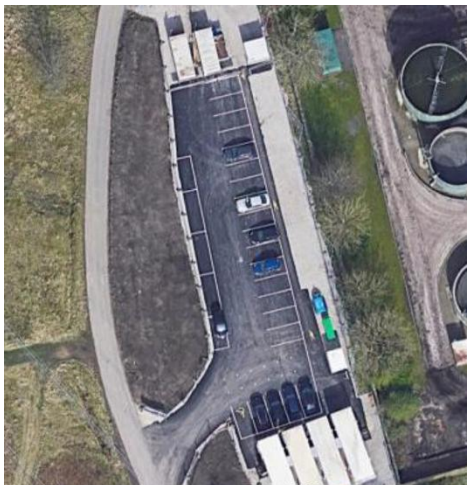


Figure 1 - Layout of proposed car park

5.1.2) No alterations to the existing car park are proposed as part of this planning application.

5.1.3) Comprising a tarmac surface, the hardstanding will be able to accommodate 26 car parking spaces, one of which is allocated specifically for disabled visitors.

5.2) Access

5.2.1) Manchester Golf Club is currently served by a vehicular access off Rochdale Road (A664). This access provides excellent accessibility to Slattocks Roundabout, with the A627(M) circa 1.3km north east.

5.2.2) From the classified highway, the existing car park serving Manchester Golf Club is around 400m north. Two passing points exist between the A664 and existing car park as the existing track serving the golf club and WwTW is single file. There are no alterations proposed to the existing access arrangements for either the classified highway or the internal roads.

5.2.3) The area of hardstanding to which this planning application pertains to is a further 850m north of the existing car park. The majority of the access track from the Club House is single track, however there are sections which are wide enough to accommodate two-way movement. Passing points exist to ensure that the traffic can be accommodated safely within the curtilage of the golf club.

6. Planning Balance and Assessment

6.1) Principle of Development

6.1.1) On behalf of Manchester Golf Club, United Utilities seek planning permission for the retention of an existing car park constructed lawfully under permitted development powers. The following section aims to assess the proposed development in relation to Local and National Planning Policy.

6.2) Green Belt

6.2.1) As referenced above, the site is situated within the green belt with reference to Policy G4 or Rochdale's adopted Core Strategy and Chapter 13 of the National Planning Policy Framework. It is considered that policy relating to Green Belt within Rochdale's Core Strategy is outdated, and for this assessment National Planning Policy will be primarily referenced.

6.2.2) National Decision-Making Policy GB7 provides the legislative framework for development proposals which are not inappropriate within the Green Belt.

6.2.3) Policy GB 7 Part f(i) states that *mineral extraction and processing, **engineering operations**, and transport, electricity network, water and telecommunications infrastructure required in a Green Belt location are not inappropriate development providing their impact on the **openness of the Green Belt** is minimised, and there would not be a significant conflict with the **Green Belt purposes.***

6.2.4) The retention of an existing car park is considered in this context to be an engineering operation. On this basis, and with reference to National Planning Policy, the principle of development proposed within this application is considered acceptable providing it can be demonstrated that the Impact on the 'openness of the Green Belt' is minimised, and there is not 'significant conflict' with the Green Belt purposes.

6.2.5) Paragraph GB2 of the NPPF details the five purposes of the green belt, which have been considered against the proposed development.

a) Check the unrestricted sprawl of large, built-up areas

Due to the sites separation distance from any large built-up area, it Is considered that the proposed development **would not contribute** to the unrestricted sprawl of large, built-up areas.

b) Prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another

The scale of development proposed within this planning application is minor. The proposed car park is consistent with land uses at Manchester Golf Club, with features similar to those approved under planning application 20/00048/FUL. It is considered that whilst the proposed site would be situated within a gap between towns, it would only contribute an extremely small proportion of this gap between the nearby settlements. Due to the presence of existing landscape features, the site does not make a contribution to the visual separation of nearby towns and on this basis, the site is considered to make a **weak contribution** in respect of preventing neighbouring towns merging.

c) Assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment

Policy GB 2 Part C aims to preserve natural and countryside landscapes which surround urban settlements. As mentioned above, the location of the proposed development is not considered to encroach into the countryside. The proposed car park is modest in site, excellently screened by landscape bunds and existing infrastructure and is well accommodated the immediate context. Encroachment on the countryside as a result of the proposed development is considered to be **low.**

d) Preserve the setting and special character of historic towns

The site does not form part of the setting of a historic town, with the nearest settlements of Middleton, Castleton and Heywood separated from the proposed development by landscape features and national infrastructure. Due to the physical distance from these settlements, coupled with the land uses surrounding the car park and lack of above ground development proposed, it is considered that the site **does not contribute** to the preservation of any historic town.

e) Assist urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling or derelict and other urban land

The existing, temporary car park is bounded by the M62 to the north, the Caldervale Rail Line and Rochdale Canal to the east and Manchester Golf Club to the south and west. No urban land exists directly adjacent to, or in close proximity to the existing car park and it is considered the locations contribution in assisting urban regeneration through the recycling of derelict or other urban land is **very low.**

6.2.6) Overall it is considered that the proposed development would not have 'significant' conflict with the purposes of the green belt as defined within the National Planning Policy Framework.

Openness

6.2.7) As the Planning Practice Guidance states, assessing the impact of a proposal on the openness of the Green Belt, where it is relevant to do so, requires a judgement based on the circumstances of the case.

6.2.8) "Openness", for the purpose of Green Belt policy is not formally defined within Planning Policy or legislation but is taken to mean the absence of built development. The term "openness", comprises a spatial and visual component which should be assessed in considering whether a proposal preserves the openness of the Green Belt.

6.2.9) When assessing the visual impact of the proposed development, the proposed car park should be viewed in the context of existing development and landscape features in proximity to it.

6.2.10) To determine the extent of impact the proposed hardstanding may have, it is important to consider the immediate vicinity of the site and wider locality. The site lies within a small area of depression adjacent to the boundary of the existing Wastewater Treatment Works. Various above ground infrastructure exists in

close proximity to the proposed development, including Kiosks, Storm Tanks, Sewer Infrastructure and Boundary Treatment.



Figure 2 - View looking east of the proposed car park



Figure 3 - View looking north east of the proposed car park



Figure 4 - View looking south east of the proposed car park



Figure 5 - View looking north of the proposed car park



Figure 6 - View looking south of the proposed car park



Figure 7 - View looking north of the proposed car park

6.2.11) As shown in the site photographs above, the proposed car park benefits from extensive vegetation to the north, south and west of the car park with the WwTW forming an industrial setting to the east. The site is well contained within its immediate surroundings. On this basis it is considered that visual impact arising from the proposed development will be low.

6.2.12) When assessing the development, the degree of activity likely to be generated as a result of it should also be considered.

6.2.13) Manchester Golf Club currently has provision for circa 140 car parking spaces, and the provision of 26 additional parking spaces is anticipated to supplement, rather than materially impact the significance of activity generated by the Golf Club.

6.2.14) When considering the cumulative impact of the developments impact on openness from spatial, visual and activity perspectives, it is considered that the openness of the Green Belt at this location is maintained.

6.2.15) The proposed retention of the existing hardstanding to form a car park has been assessed against national Green Belt policy. It is considered that the development comprises an engineering operation, which is not inappropriate development within the green belt. When assessed against the five purposes of the green belt, it is clear that the site does not strongly contribute to the purposes of the Green Belt. When assessed against the principle of 'Openness', the existing landscape features and lack of above ground development ensure that the openness of the Green Belt in this context is maintained. On this basis, it is considered that the development is consistent with national policy in relation to development within the Green Belt.

6.3) Visual and Residential Amenity

6.3.1) As highlighted within section 6.2, the site lies within a largely rural environment, albeit adjacent to the industrial Castleton Wastewater Treatment Works

6.3.2) The very nature of the proposed development, notably the lack of above ground development, inherently reduces any proposed visual impact. This is further aided by the landscape features which surround the site. It is considered that the permanent use of the existing hard standing to provide additional car parking provision would not have a negligible impact on the character of the area

6.3.3) With regard to residential amenity, it should be noted that the additional car parking spaces represent a circa 18% increase in parking provision, which is a small but meaningful addition to MGC. This additional provision is not considered to impact residential amenity with regard to noise, vibrations, light and air pollution and overlooking when considered in the context of the lack of sensitive receptors in close proximity to the site and the existing uses which exist at MGC.

6.3.4) On this basis it is considered that proposed development would be in conformity with Policy GB9 of Rochdale's Adopted Core Strategy and National Decision-Making Policy P3 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

6.4) Flood Risk

6.4.1) Following a review of the Environment Agency's Flood Risk Map for Planning, the site is situated within Flood Zone 1. This constitutes land with the lowest probability of flooding, defined as a less than a 1 in 1000 chance of flooding per annum. On this basis the proposal is policy compliant with Chapter 19 of the National Planning Policy Framework

6.4.2) The proposed development makes no changes to the existing drainage arrangements of the existing car park. Surface water follows the general topography of the site and infiltrates into the ground surrounding the site. There is no interaction with the public sewer network.

6.5) Highways

6.5.1) National Decision-Making Policy TR6 states that 'Development proposals should be refused if they would have a severe adverse impact on the transport network (in terms of capacity and congestion, including cumulative impacts), or an unacceptable impact on highway safety; taking into account any mitigation measures proposed as well as any wider network improvements, including measures to support sustainable patterns of movement'

6.52) It should be noted that this application as proposed represents a similar parking provision to that approved under planning permission 20/00048/FUL, and when considered in a holistic manner the proposed development would not represent a significant increase in traffic generated by the golf course.

6.5.3) The proposed development would also increase highways safety by providing additional, regulated parking provision at MGC. Whilst the provision is relatively small, it would limit unauthorised parking both within the golf club and on the surrounding highways network.

6.5.4) No changes are proposed from the adopted highways network, and no works are required to the existing hard standing.

6.5.5) As part of the pre-application response, Rochdale's Highways Officer was consulted on the application and raised no objections. On this basis, it is considered that the proposal is in conformity with policy T2 of Rochdale's Adopted Local Plan, policies T1 and T3 of Rochdale's Regulation 19 Local Plan and Policy TR6 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

6.6) Biodiversity Net Gain

6.6.1) Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) is set out under Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act (Inserted by the Environment Act 2021). Under the framework, aside from some exceptions, every grant of planning permission is subject to at least a 10% increase in biodiversity value relative to the pre-development biodiversity value of the site.

6.6.2) The Defra Statutory Biodiversity Metric (2024), updated most recently in June 2026, provides guidance to developers and planning authorities regarding the implementation of BNG in development proposals.

6.6.3) This total area of the red line boundary is 1247 square metres, which falls below the current 2000m^2 exemption threshold. On this basis, the provision of Biodiversity Net Gain is not required.

7. Summary

7.1) Conclusion

7.1.1) United Utilities, on behalf of Manchester Golf Club, seek planning permission for the retention of an existing car park constructed lawfully under permitted development powers.

7.1.2) The proposed car park is situated approximately 1km north of the existing club house and adjacent to the boundary of Castleton WwTW.

7.1.3) The proposed car park is modest both in size and scale, and will provide 26 additional car parking spaces for Manchester Golf Club.

7.1.4) The additional car parking will make a valuable contribution to Manchester Golf Club, providing additional capacity to help to attract and deliver international standard amateur and professional golf events at Manchester Golf Club.

7.1.5) On the back of this, economic benefit facilitated by the improved provisions at the club. MGC will be able to expand on its offering of elite golfing facilities on the national and international scale. The proposal would enable increased participation and viewing at the club, providing social benefits.

7.1.6) The above directly supports the National Planning Policy Frameworks presumption in favour of sustainable development.

7.1.7) Through this supporting statement, it has been demonstrated that the proposal would be acceptable within the Green Belt; as it constitutes an engineering operation, does not conflict with the five purposes of the green belt and would preserve the openness of the green belt designation.

7.1.8) No other significant constraints exist, the proposal is within general conformity with planning policy at a local and national scale, and on this basis it is considered that the application should be approved.